



# DGA News

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Democratic Governors' Association

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**Embargoed until 9:45 p.m. EST 1/28/03**

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**Embargoed until 9:45 PM EST – January 28, 2003**

## **Democratic Response to the State of the Union As Prepared for Delivery by Governor Gary Locke**

Good evening. I'm Gary Locke, the Governor of Washington State. It's an honor to give the response to President Bush on behalf of my family, my state, my fellow Democratic Governors, and the Democratic Party. Tonight, I'd like to offer our view of how to strengthen America.

My grandfather came to this country from China nearly a century ago, and worked as a servant. Now, I serve as governor just one mile from where my grandfather worked. It took our family a hundred years to travel that mile -- it was a voyage we could only make in America. The values that sustained us -- education, hard work, responsibility and family -- guide me every day. I want every person to have the chance this country gave our family.

But like many of you, I am concerned about the challenges now before us.

Tonight, President Bush spoke about the threats we face from terrorists and dictators abroad.

Many of the young Americans who fought in Afghanistan -- and who tonight are still defending our freedom -- were trained in Washington State. We are so grateful to them, to all the members of our armed services and their families -- and we pray for their safe return. But the war against terror is not over. Al Qaeda still targets Americans. Osama Bin Laden is still at large. As we rise to the many challenges around the globe, let us never lose sight of who attacked our people here at home.

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We also support the President in working with our allies and the United Nations to eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein and Kim Jong Il of North Korea. Make no mistake: Saddam Hussein is a ruthless tyrant, and he must give up his weapons of mass destruction. We support the President in the course he has followed so far -- working with Congress, working with the United Nations, insisting on strong and unfettered inspections. We need allies today in 2003, just as much as we needed them in Desert Storm and just as we needed them on D-Day in 1944, when American soldiers -- including my father -- fought to vanquish the Nazi threat. We must convince the world that Saddam Hussein is not America's problem alone -- he's the world's problem. We urge President Bush to stay this course for we are far stronger when we stand with other nations than when we stand alone.

I have no doubt that together, we can meet these global challenges.

But to be strong abroad we need to be strong at home. And today, in too many ways, our country is headed in the wrong direction. We are missing the opportunity to strengthen America for the future. Democrats have a positive, specific plan to turn our nation around.

Today, the economy is limping along. Some say it's a recovery, but for many people there's no recovery in our states and cities. There's no recovery in our rural communities. There's no recovery for working Americans and for those searching for jobs to feed and clothe their families.

After gaining 22 million jobs in eight years, we've now lost two million jobs in the last two years since President Bush took office -- 100,000 lost last month alone.

Two years ago, the federal budget was in surplus. Now, this administration's policies will produce massive deficits of over a trillion dollars over the next decade.

These policies have powerful and painful consequences. States and cities now face our worst budget crises since World War II. We're being forced to cut vital services from police to fire to health care -- and many are being forced to raise taxes. We need a White House that understands the challenges our communities and people are facing across America.

We Democrats have a plan to restore prosperity -- so the United States once again becomes the great job engine it was in the 1990s. It's rooted in three principles. It must give our economy an immediate jump-start; it must benefit middle class families rather than just a few; and it must be fiscally responsible, so we have the savings to strengthen Social Security and protect our homeland.

Our plan provides over a hundred billion dollars in tax relief and investments, right now:

- Tax relief for middle class and working families -- immediately.
- Incentives for businesses to invest and create jobs -- this year.
- Substantial help for cities and states like yours and mine -- now.

- Extended unemployment benefits -- without delay -- for nearly a million American workers who have already exhausted their benefits.
- And all without passing on the bill to our children and grandchildren through exploding budget deficits for years to come.

Now, as you heard tonight, President Bush has a very different plan. We think it's upside down economics: it does too little to stimulate the economy now and does too much to weaken our economic future. It will create huge, permanent deficits that will raise interest rates, stifle growth, hinder homeownership and cut off the avenues of opportunity that have let so many work themselves up from poverty.

We believe every American should get a tax cut. That's the way to create broad based growth. But we shouldn't spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a plan that helps neither the economy nor the families that need it most -- while making it harder to save Social Security and invest in health care and education. Think about it: Under the President's proposal to eliminate taxes on stock dividends, the top 1% -- that's people who earn over \$300,000 -- would get more tax relief than the bottom 95% of taxpayers combined. That's wrong. And it's irresponsible. Let's choose the right course -- the successful and fair course -- for our economy.

We have another urgent priority: homeland security. In this unprecedented fight against terror, the frontlines are in our own neighborhoods and communities.

This one hits home. In 1999, an Al Qaeda operative tried to enter my state with a trunk full of explosives. Thankfully, he was caught just in time. Now, a year and a half after September 11th, America is still far too vulnerable. Last year Congress authorized \$2.5 billion in vital new resources to protect our citizens -- for equipment for firefighters and police, to protect ports, to guard against bioterrorism, to secure nuclear power plants, and more. It's hard to believe, but President Bush actually refused to release the money. Republicans now say we can't afford it. The Democrats say: If we're serious about protecting our homeland, we can and we must.

Now, to strengthen America at home, there's much more to do.

You and I know that education is the great equalizer, the hope of democracy, and the key to the information economy of the future. In my state we have raised test scores, cut class sizes, trained teachers, launched innovative reading programs, offered college scholarships even as the federal government cut its aid to deserving students. Democrats worked with President Bush to pass a law that demands more of our students and invests more in our schools. But his budget fails to give communities the help they need to meet these new, high standards. We say we want to leave no child behind, but our schools need more than kind words about education from Washington, D.C. -- we need a real partnership to renew our schools.

Tonight, we also heard the president talk about health care. Too many seniors can't afford the remarkable new drugs that can save their lives -- some are even skimping on food to pay for needed medication. On this issue, the contrast is clear. Democrats insist on a Medicare prescription drug benefit for all seniors. President Bush says he supports a prescription drug benefit -- but let's read the fine print: his plan only helps

seniors who leave traditional Medicare. Our parents shouldn't be forced to give up their doctor or join an HMO to get the medicine they need.

That wouldn't save Medicare -- it would privatize it. And it would put too many seniors at too much risk -- just when they need the security of Medicare.

And, finally, let's talk about the environment and energy. Environmental protection has been a tremendous bipartisan success story over three decades. Our air and water are cleaner.

In communities in my state and yours, conservation is a way of life. But the administration is determined to roll back much of this progress. Our nation should lead global efforts to promote environmental responsibility -- not shun them. And instead of opening up the Alaskan wilderness to oil drilling, we should be committed to a national policy to reduce our dependence on oil by promoting American technology and sustainability.

Yes, the Republican Party now controls the executive branch and both houses of Congress.

But we Democrats will hold the administration and congressional leaders accountable. We will work to create jobs and strengthen homeland security. We will fight to protect a woman's right to choose and we will fight for affirmative action, equal opportunity and diversity in our schools and our workplaces. Above all, we will demand that this government advance our common purpose and not pander to narrow special interests.

That's the vision of the Democratic Party -- in statehouses, in Congress, and in the homes of millions of Americans. We believe it's the best course for our nation. It is the vision we will work for -- and stand for -- in the coming year.

This is not an easy time. But I often think about my grandfather, arriving by steamship a hundred years ago. He had no family here; he spoke no English. I can only imagine how he must have felt as he looked out at his new country. There are millions of families like mine -- people whose ancestors dreamed the American Dream and worked hard to make it come true. They transformed adversity into opportunity. Yes, these are challenging times -- but the American family... the American Dream... has prevailed before. That's the character of our people and the hallmark of our country. The lesson of our legacy is, if we work together, and make the right choices, we will become a stronger, more united and more prosperous nation.

Thank you for listening, and God Bless America.

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